



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

VIII.—*A Modern Classical Course.*

By F. V. N. PAINTER, A. M.,

PROFESSOR OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES IN ROANOKE
COLLEGE, SALEM, VA.

IN discussing a Modern Classical Course for our colleges, I wish to begin with a word in reference to the nature of education. By so doing, I hope not only to prevent the cry of low utilitarian views, but also to lay a solid foundation for the discussion that is to follow. I accept the definition of Comenius that education consists in complete human development. Man comes into the world endowed with certain physical and mental capacities. These are at first in a germinal or undeveloped condition ; but they contain within themselves large possibilities and a strong impulse toward development. The object of education is to lead the several parts of man's nature to a harmonious realization of their highest possibilities. The finished result is a complete manhood, the elements of which are a healthy body, a clear and well-informed intellect, sensibilities quickly susceptible to every right feeling, and a steady will whose volitions are determined by reason and an enlightened conscience.

The educational or developing process in relation to mind involves two factors, which, though logically distinguishable, are practically inseparable. These are exercise and the acquisition of knowledge. The great law underlying mental, as well as physical growth, is self-activity. The various faculties of the mind must for a long period be brought into frequent exercise in order to become active, obedient, and strong. Facts, relations, truths, present the occasion of this activity. Self-activity in the appropriation of knowledge is the condition of healthful mental growth. This is the truth which should govern the arrangement of any general course of education.

The great problem at present in collegiate education is the arrangement of a course of study which, together with the highest degree of mental discipline, will afford the largest amount of valuable knowledge. In the solution of this problem, two mis-

takes are possible. On the one hand, studies may be chosen for their utility as sources of valuable information ; on the other, for their value as a mental gymnastic. Encyclopedias may be adopted as text-books ; or Sanscrit and Arabic be given prominence. Both mistakes are equally serious. In the one case, the student becomes a repository of facts which he cannot use wisely in the conduct of life ; in the other, he acquires a discipline that leaves him ignorant and helpless in the presence of the manifold duties of manhood. In neither case, to use the language of Milton, is he fitted "to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously, all the offices both private and public, of peace and war." And this must be, in its external aspects, the end of a liberal education.

With these truths in mind, I proceed to an examination of the chief course offered American students ; namely, the ancient classical course. This, I believe, concedes too much to the disciplinary part of education. When the great modern literatures were in their infancy, and Latin was still the language of the learned world, this course was no doubt the best that could have been devised. Apart from disciplinary value, it possessed practical utility. But by national growth, the progress of art and science, and the development of refined modern tongues, Latin and Greek have lost most of their value for practical life. Thus the ancient classical course has fallen out of due relation to the needs of the present time. It is true that an acquaintance with ancient life, because of its relation to modern civilization, is indispensable to every educated man. But this can be obtained without a profound knowledge of Latin and Greek. Ancient life and thought have been made accessible in modern tongues by the historian and the translator. As President Eliot has said : "It is a very rare scholar who has not learned much more about the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans through English than through Hebrew, Greek, or Latin." To give the ancient languages pre-eminence simply for their disciplinary and etymological value seems a waste of time.

These and other considerations have given rise to a widespread dissatisfaction with the unmodified ancient classical course. Significant voices in our own and other lands have been raised against it. In Germany this dissatisfaction has found practical expression in the "real schools," which omit Greek entirely, restrict Latin, and provide extended courses in the modern lan-

guages and natural sciences. In this country, it has given rise to our various elective, scientific, and philosophical courses, which, however much they may differ in other respects, agree in reducing the amount of Latin and Greek. Even in the ancient classical course itself, Latin and Greek have been somewhat forced back from their former prominence.

The principal alternative course in our American colleges has been the scientific. This course omits Greek, reduces the amount of Latin, and provides, in connection with additional studies in the modern languages, extended instruction in the natural sciences. It corresponds essentially to the "real schools" of Germany. As compared with the ancient classical course, it reduces the amount of linguistic study fully one-third. By the substitution of natural science for language, the scientific course seems to attach too much importance to the knowledge factor of education. As at present pursued in most of our colleges, the study of natural science consists chiefly in memorizing facts laid down in text-books, and hence possesses but little value as a disciplinary exercise. It does not give the manifold discipline acquired in linguistic studies. After a considerable period of trial, the scientific course is coming to be considered defective as a means to education. Amherst College has abolished it. The philosophical faculty of the University of Berlin has declared that "the preparatory education acquired in the real schools is, taken altogether, inferior to that guaranteed by the gymnasia." It seems probable that in the near future the scientific course, except for special students, will be relegated to a very subordinate position.

The modern classical course, to be described in the next paragraph, seems to avoid the mistakes of the other two courses. It makes linguistic study the basis of education. It makes a partial substitution of modern for ancient languages, at the same time it gives Latin and Greek recognition, because of their grammatical excellence and etymological relations to the modern tongues. While making ample provision for the training of the mind, it keeps in view the relations and needs of modern life.

The nature of this course will appear more fully from a specific statement of the changes proposed. For the degree of Bachelor of Arts, our best Southern colleges require about six years in Latin, about five years in Greek, and usually two years

in either French or German. This is the ancient classical course, which requires in the aggregate about thirteen years of linguistic study other than English, occupying nearly one-half of the student's time. In the modern classical course here advocated, it is proposed to retain about the same amount of linguistic study, but with a different apportionment of time. Four years should be allowed to German, four years to French, three or four years to Latin, and not less than one year to Greek on account of its relation to our technical nomenclature. This year in Greek, which should come in the collegiate rather than in the preparatory course, should have special reference, like the study of Anglo-Saxon, to English etymology. In institutions of higher grade, the same ratio between the modern and the ancient languages might be observed in laying out a more thorough course. These changes would not affect any of the other college departments, though it might be found expedient to make a year or two of Latin elective with natural science.

This course should hold equal rank with the ancient classical course and lead to the same degree. In view of existing dissatisfaction with the two courses now most in vogue, the modern classical course appears well adapted to meet a popular want. It affords a fine mental discipline, it gives a large acquaintance with English etymology; it imparts a thorough knowledge of general grammar; it prepares the student for the numerous exigencies of business and travel; it introduces him to the two richest modern literatures after his own; it prepares him to appreciate the master-pieces of antiquity when read in translations; and what needs especially to be emphasized, it furnishes him with a good working knowledge of two foreign languages, whose treasures of thought he can use at will throughout his literary or professional life.

Of these several considerations in favor of a modern classical course, there are two which I wish to consider more in detail. The first is the disciplinary worth of the modern languages—a fact that has not been duly appreciated. After careful consideration and experiment, I am prepared to claim for French and German equal rank with Latin and Greek as disciplinary studies. An inquiry into the nature of the discipline resulting from language study will, I think, justify this position. The memory is cultivated in acquiring a vocabulary of words and in mastering

the principles of grammar. The attention is trained in the work of translation. The sense of discrimination in regard to the meaning and force of words is sharpened. The literary taste is developed by contact with the classic page. And above all, the reasoning, judging, and combining faculties are in constant exercise. All these elements of a manifold mental training enter fully into the study of French and German. And when we consider the increased interest with which these languages are studied; their freedom from the abuse of translations; and the additional mental quickening connected with conversational exercises, it is not too much, perhaps, to claim for French and German superior advantages over Latin and Greek as disciplinary studies.

The other point of which I wish to speak in detail is the comparative worth of ancient and modern literature. As to matter, the superiority of modern literature is conceded. Says the Hon. D. H. Chamberlain, in his reply to Mr. Charles Francis Adams: "I do not mean, by any means, and I do not understand the classicists so-called anywhere to mean, that Greek literature expresses the best results of human thought in science, morality, philosophy, or religion. It does not; it could not. Greek literature was produced in an age of the most limited knowledge of the great subjects which most concern men in modern times. It is not in the Greek literature of the classic period that we find what may be called the best results of human thought as applied to the material world of nature and life, or to those problems which concern the present moral duties or the future destiny of man. The materials of modern literature are incomparably richer, the results of modern thought are immeasurably more valuable and beneficent."

But the superiority of modern literature being conceded as to substance, the question still remains as to form. And after all, in polite literature, this is the most valuable element. I have been at a good deal of pains to satisfy myself on this point. I have placed Milton by the side of Homer and Virgil; Goethe and Racine by the side of Euripides; Hume, Gibbon, and Macauley by the side of Thucydides and Livy; Bacon by the side of Plato; and the result has not been unfavorable to the moderns. I consider the judgment of Prof. John S. Blackie entirely correct. "I claim for the ancients," he says, "no fault-

less excellence, no immeasurable superiority. The raptures which some people seem to feel in perusing Homer and Virgil, Livy and Tacitus, while they turn over the pages of Shakspeare and Milton, Hume and Robertson, with coldness and indifference, I hold to be either pure affectation or gross self-delusion ; being fully satisfied that we are in no want of models in our English tongue which, for depth of thought, soundness of reasoning, for truth of narrative, and what has been called the philosophy of history, nay, even for poetical beauty, tenderness and sublimity, may fairly challenge comparison with the most renowned productions of antiquity."

In view of the foregoing considerations, I think we may confidently appeal at least to the public in behalf of a modern classical course.